

## **Proposed Improvements to Piping Rock Memorial Park & Martello Field Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is being proposed?**

The Borough of Rumson is proposing to improve the use of Piping Rock Memorial Park and Martello Field by converting the baseball field and a portion of the small lacrosse/youth football practice field into a regulation size, all-weather, multi-sport, lighted, synthetic turf field. The proposed field would be able to accommodate soccer, lacrosse, flag football, tackle football practice, field hockey, school teams, and other activities for youth and adults. In addition, the field may accommodate 46/60 baseball, which has yet to be finally determined. The tennis courts would remain as they are and the playground would be relocated to the east end of the current lacrosse field. Maintaining the beauty and neighborhood feel of the park is a high design priority.

### **Why is a turf field being proposed in Rumson?**

Recent years have seen a growth in demand from school, recreation and travel programs, including programming demand for ever younger residents: e.g., a growth in the number of programs, number of participants per program, and the amount of field hours per program, as well as a trend toward year-round sports' practices/games. The result is that field demand far exceeds the supply of available field space in Rumson. The Borough of Rumson and the surrounding Two River area is fully developed and there is very little land for open space, yet the demand for fields is increasing; thus, the Borough must search for new and creative ways to increase the amount of open space available for passive and active recreation.

Rumson Boro provides playing fields for the local schools, Rumson Recreation, travel teams, adult leagues, tournaments, private trainers and passive recreational use. During peak use this adds up to over 3000 participants per week leading to congested parking lots, crowded fields, and no rest time for our fields. This causes extreme stress and rapid wear on our grass fields, which is both a safety concern and unsightly.

In addition, our programs experience a significant number of weather cancellations and it is difficult to reschedule missed games and practices as the assigned field schedule has limited open time slots to accommodate make-ups. A synthetic turf field allows play in all weather, except for lightning or heavy rain.

### **Why locate the turf at Piping Rock Memorial Field?**

Piping Rock Memorial Field is centrally located in town, adjacent to commercial businesses, residences and close to the schools. The area is surrounded by sidewalks, increasing the traveling safety for many neighborhood children to walk or ride their bikes to the Park and largely avoid busy Ridge and Rumson roads. In addition, the Piping Rock and Martello Memorial playing fields are regularly used at or near capacity, so the area is accustomed to frequent sports activity in this park.

Another consideration is the relative quality of Martello Field, currently used primarily as a small lacrosse field and youth football practice field. Piping Rock Bottling plant was located here years ago and even today glass "rocks" surface on the field and it is difficult to grow grass. Thus, the field is in poor condition and difficult to maintain relative to the Borough's other grass fields.

### **Will the entire park be converted to synthetic turf?**

**No.** A regulation size, multi-use field is proposed from the Forrest Ave parking lot and would extend approximately to the current location of the playground. The remainder of the park, including the east end of Martello Field, would be natural grass enhanced by beautiful, specimen-quality trees and shrubs.

**Will the Playground be moved?**

**Yes.** The playground would be refurbished and relocated to the east end of Martello Field. It would be surrounded by natural grass and specimen trees in a beautiful, accessible and open location.

**Will the batting cage be moved?**

**Yes.** The batting cage would be relocated to Meadow Ridge Park, centrally located in the park behind the main building, easily accessible to the three baseball fields located in Meadow Ridge Park.

**What will happen to the Piping Rock Memorial Baseball Field?**

The proposed turf field is designed to accommodate regulation lacrosse, soccer, field hockey and practice football field (no goal posts). A 46/60 baseball field could also be marked out in the turf and this is still under consideration.

**Will there be a 50/70 Baseball Field in Rumson?**

**Yes.** The current Piping Rock Memorial baseball field is a 46/60 convertible to a 50/70 field. Another field would serve as a convertible 46/60 and 50/70 field, likely Meadow Ridge West, which would be accessible both spring and fall and near the batting cage. Riverside North is also a possibility, but would only be readily accessible in the spring as Riverside fields are dedicated soccer fields in the fall.

**What is the current demand for a 50/70 size baseball field?**

A 50/70 field is used by 11&12 year old travel baseball teams. Currently, there is one resident travel baseball team with approximately 14 children who use a 50/70 field. Recreation does not currently use 50/70 field for any of its divisions and the Borough has had no non-resident permit requests for use of a 50/70 field. Despite the limited demand, the Borough would convert an existing field to be playable for both 46/60 and 50/70 size requirements.

**Where will RFHRHS play softball?**

Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School currently has one softball team, which would play at Meadow Ridge West ("MRW"). Thus, MRW would serve the same groups as Piping Rock baseball field currently serves.

**Will the Tennis Courts be razed?**

**No.** Razing the tennis courts was never considered. The two tennis courts would remain in their current form and location.

**Will the Martello Family Memorial be relocated?**

**No.** The Martello Family Memorial would remain in its current location between the tennis courts and the east end of Martello Field, in front of the new playground.

**Will the K. D. McHeffey Memorial be relocated?**

**Yes.** The K. D. McHeffey Memorial would be moved to a more prominent location at the entrance of the proposed field, approximately 50 feet from its current location and in consultation with the donors.

**Will the new field be Green Acres?**

**Yes.** All Rumson Borough parks are Green Acres and have held that designation since the 1970s.

**What does it mean for a field to be designated Green Acres?**

If the development or acquisition of any municipal parklands were funded in whole or part with Green Acres public funding, all municipal parklands are then subject to the Green Acres Program regulations, including providing all residents of New Jersey reasonable access to the facilities. All Rumson parks are subject to Green Acres Program regulations and have been since the 1970s.

**Does Green Acres give non-residents equal access to the fields?**

Under a Green Acres Program designation any member of the public, resident or non-resident, must be provided reasonable access to a facility. However, as with all Borough fields, organized teams and activities would require a Borough-issued permit. Resident teams/activities may have priority access to permits, as long as reasonable access is allowed to all applicants. In addition, the Borough may deny permit requests from various public and private parties each year due to a shortage of field time or incompatible use. The Borough is also permitted to close fields for rest or maintenance.

**Do you expect heavier auto traffic with a turf field?**

**No.** In fact, auto congestion could improve. Currently, it is not unusual to have four different sports teams, their coaches and spectators at Martello lacrosse field and Piping Rock baseball field, resulting in 100 or more people at the park at one time. Under the proposed plan, there would be additional parking created by adding spaces to the current Carton Street lot – this would not change the current footprint of the lot -- and also extending the parking in front of the tennis courts on River Road, which is well screened with mature landscaping. This should also help relieve the congested street parking during the school day.

**Will the reconfigured park have a stadium-like feel?**

**No.** A critical goal of the project is to maintain a bucolic, local park feel. Specimen trees and shrubbery would be planted, border areas and the proximate playground area will be grass. Spectator viewing stands and lighting would be the equivalent of what is currently used now, appropriate for a park in a residential area. Maintaining aesthetics consistent with Rumson standards is a high priority.

**How will the turf be funded?**

The project has been designed in two phases. It is estimated that Phase I costs would amount to \$1.2million and the entire project cost for both phases would amount to approximately \$1.8 million. The Borough has applied for and been awarded \$250,000 in matching funds from the Monmouth County Open Space Grant Committee for Phase I. The Borough anticipates applying for an additional \$250,000 in Phase II of the MCOS Grant in September 2015. The remainder would be sought from public and private contributions in the future.

**When was project initiated?**

The Phase I Monmouth County Open Space Grant Application was written in the Summer of 2014. There was a public hearing on September 9, 2014. The Grant was submitted in September 2014 and the award was announced in December 2014.